LOGOS

DATE

The Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee 3 on Health and Human Services
1020 N Street, Room 502
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Chair, Senate Budget Committee
1020 N Street, Room 502
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Joaquin Arambula
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee 1 on Health and Human Services
1021 O Street, Suite 8230
Sacramento, California 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8230
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Senators Eggman and Skinner, Assemblymember Ting, and Dr. Arambula,

We appreciate the Governor’s and the Legislature’s support for and significant investment in school health and student support services through the 2021-22 Budget. We believe that this and future investments will go a long way to addressing the significant disparities in child and youth health and education outcomes, disparities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To build upon the existing initiatives, we believe that there needs to be an intentional focus and investment in a service delivery model that meets the needs of students where they spend most of their time: in schools. **We propose a one-time $100 million investment to expand school-based health centers (SBHCs) – which provide an integrated approach to delivering comprehensive physical, behavioral, and other health services in school settings.**

California’s SBHCs have grown to become an important part of the health care safety net, providing access to a range of critical health care services for thousands of underserved children and adolescents. Yet only 3% of public schools in California currently have an SBHC. Research shows that SBHCs increase access to care, reduce health disparities and provide potential savings through better preventive care and reduced emergency department utilization, drug utilization, and inpatient treatment services. And SBHCs have a positive impact on absences, dropout rates, disciplinary problems, and other academic outcomes.

Despite effectiveness of SBHCs and the awareness that students are best supported with access to health care and supportive services in schools, **California has never provided state funding for SBHCs.** State funding is necessary to support the continued expansion of SBHCs. A one-time investment in SBHC construction and expansion would complement current state-funded programs (like Community Schools and the Child & Youth Behavioral Health Initiative) by providing critical access to start-up and capital resources. One of the primary barriers to establishing new SBHCs is the significant upfront costs required to develop new or renovated centers.

**A one-time investment of $100 million would support approximately 200 grants to launch and build new SBHCs or expand care at existing SBHCs.** Grants would prioritize applications that provide integrated primary and behavioral health care services and target underserved communities as defined in AB 1940. Up to 10% of these funds may be used to administer the grant program and provide technical assistance to grant recipients. These funds would be made available for up to three years and would help catalyze dramatic improvements in access to care for low-income children and youth.

Thank you in advance for considering this request. We appreciate your advocacy on behalf of California’s students. Please contact Lisa Eisenberg at leisenberg@schoolhealthcenters.org for more information or to schedule a meeting.

Respectfully,

[List of organizations]